

Chapter 10. Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment

Overview

This chapter describes a comprehensive framework for communities to use when planning prevention, intervention and treatment strategies. These strategies are intended to help reduce various risk factors and institute protective approaches in Weed and Seed areas.

An initiative to provide prevention, early intervention, and treatment should include holistic and alternative applications that use both traditional and innovative approaches. Social problems evolving from the risk factors confronting individuals and institutions are complex; therefore, it is not realistic to expect one solution to fit every need. Responses tailored to the special needs of each at-risk population must be carefully designed.

This chapter also discusses the Safe Haven program, which provides core prevention, intervention, and treatment activities. Weed and Seed sites display an impressive ability to develop a Safe Haven into a centerpiece for providing services and giving the neighborhood a facility from which to coordinate resources.

Throughout society, people are searching for answers to the problems of drug abuse, violence, delinquency, school dropouts, and teen pregnancy. Although these are not new problems, they have become more urgent as we have become increasingly aware of the long-term consequences of at-risk behavior.

Vision

Prevention, intervention, and treatment are core seeding components of Weed and Seed. Every Weed and Seed site should develop a framework

for organizing a safe and healthy community that includes prevention, intervention, and treatment strategies.

The needs assessment process identifies resources in your community that will provide the foundation for prevention, intervention, and treatment activities. The Weed and Seed Steering Committee can provide leadership to build a coalition of groups to provide these resources. The coalition can reduce fragmentation and duplication of services and provide a more comprehensive system for service delivery.

For this discussion, prevention, intervention, and treatment activities to help solve problems are described as follows:

Prevention activities should be undertaken before the at-risk behavior becomes widespread in the community. For example, if teen pregnancy is increasing, information programs on prevention and professional counseling may be the best choice.

Intervention refers to efforts to develop a comprehensive strategy to eliminate harmful behavior before it becomes entrenched in the community. For example, if truancy among high school students is a problem, the solution might involve developing activities to keep younger students interested in staying in school. Or, the community may design a mentoring program that pairs community policing officers with young students.

Treatment represents the most protracted and focused effort to combat undesirable behavior. Recommendations by professionals on the prevention, intervention, and treatment (PIT)

subcommittee about the types of help available and the referral process can be especially useful.

Problems, however, do not always break down into such distinct categories; therefore, some of the PIT programs should combine two and possibly three strategies when necessary. As with every part of the Weed and Seed strategy, participants must be flexible and develop activities that reflect the community's needs and resources.

Each approach should be included in the planning phase, but remember that prevention is the best method. It is preferable—and easier—to stop negative behaviors from developing rather than to address them after they become major problems. It is almost always more cost effective.

Implementation Process

Step 1: Establish a Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment Subcommittee

The Weed and Seed Steering Committee should create a PIT subcommittee to review and expand on the issues identified by the needs assessment. The Steering Committee should select the members of the PIT subcommittee at the beginning of the planning process so seeding activities can be designed and incorporated during the developmental phase of Weed and Seed. Membership should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that all groups in the community are represented. Among those to be considered for the PIT subcommittee are the following:

- Community-based organizations are usually well known and accepted in the community. They may also be current service providers trusted by residents.
- Mental health and health practitioners bring their professional knowledge and skills and provide an important perspective on mental

health- and health-related issues to the discussions and planning sessions.

- Substance abuse agencies provide advantages that are sometimes overlooked. Members can provide information about various services available in the local community, help access the services, and arrange counseling and classes onsite.
- Young residents offer the perspectives of those for whom most services are targeted. Allowing them to express their concerns and ideas as members will also help the subcommittee gain acceptance within the youth population for its plans and recommendations.

Step 2: Review the Needs Assessment and Develop an Action Plan

The PIT subcommittee should focus on issues identified by the needs assessment conducted during the strategic planning process. This focus will help narrow the scope and prioritize community issues.

Two distinct but related components of the subcommittee's tasks are identifying risk factors and selecting protective factors. Risk factors are indicators of increased problem behaviors and include the following:

- **Family issues.** Parental attitudes toward at-risk behavior, a family history of high-risk behavior, and internal family conflicts can contribute to the development of at-risk behaviors.
- **School problems.** Attending several schools because of frequent family moves, falling behind in classwork, and falling behind in grade level can present obstacles for young people.
- **Community factors.** A poor community image, high crime levels, and inadequate public services negatively affect youth behavior.



The subcommittee should discuss strategies that will have a positive effect on these risk factors and should select those approaches that can make a significant impact. A better understanding of the risk factors is important in determining where to focus resources and what services to develop.

The second component of the subcommittee's tasks is identifying protective factors that help shield residents, especially young people, from risk factors. For example, the subcommittee can review each identified risk factor and develop activities to address it. Examples include the following:

- **Family issues.** Offer classes in family management and parenting that are especially targeted to solving some of the identified family risk factors.
- **School problems.** Develop a program with one or more partner agencies that offers homework assistance and tutoring for students.
- **Community factors.** Work with the law enforcement and community policing subcommittees to develop strategies affecting community risk factors. These issues will also be important for neighborhood revitalization. Additionally, coordinate activities with the neighborhood restoration subcommittee.

Step 3: Develop Plans for Locating and Staffing a Safe Haven

The centerpiece of the PIT effort is often a Safe Haven, which most Weed and Seed sites find to be their most valuable asset. The local site has the flexibility to develop a facility that makes the best use of available resources and best meets the needs of the neighborhood. The services offered in a Safe Haven should be developed around the identified risk and protective factors. A Safe Haven can begin with a limited number of programs and activities and expand as other needs arise. If there is an existing Safe Haven in the community, Weed and Seed funds can be used to expand and improve the services and programs it offers.

What is a Safe Haven?

A Safe Haven is a multiservice center that coordinates youth and adult services in a highly visible, secure, and accessible facility. In a Safe Haven, youth should learn to resist drugs and crime and avoid other neighborhood problems.

What type of staff should operate a Safe Haven?

Staff hired to operate a Safe Haven should possess knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the activities and programs offered. Job descriptions should be developed for all positions.

It is necessary to conduct a thorough background check of staff hired to work in a Safe Haven. The background check is required not only to ensure the safety of the children at the Safe Haven but also as a protective measure for Weed and Seed.

What are the guiding principles of a Safe Haven?

Successful Safe Havens are—

Community based. The goals and objectives of a Safe Haven should be based on the needs and resources of the designated neighborhood.

Culturally relevant. A Safe Haven should reflect the site's local culture and diversity, which should be considered when determining and coordinating services and programs.

Easily accessible. A Safe Haven should offer extended hours and be centrally located.

Education based. A Safe Haven should emphasize programs and services that are education based.

Prevention based. A Safe Haven should emphasize programs and services designed to prevent problems at the earliest possible stage.

Multiservice. Community problems often are multifaceted and require comprehensive solutions. A Safe Haven can offer a unique forum for maximizing collaboration among service agencies and community partners.

What types of programs should be offered at a Safe Haven?

Successful Safe Havens offer a variety of activities. These may include—

Afterschool activities. These programs usually provide tutoring and homework assistance but can cover other identified needs.

Recreation and sports programs. A Safe Haven can offer supervised play, sports, games, and physical fitness activities.



Group activities. Clubs such as the Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts, and similar groups can meet regularly and hold activities at a Safe Haven.

Classes. Subjects can include health and nutrition, citizenship, and those related to risk and protective factors.

Training. Skills training can be offered through collaboration with other agencies. Computer training for youth and adults is both popular and practical.

Education on cultural issues. Programs should be developed to teach children to take pride in themselves, their families, and their cultural heritage.

Health care services. The PIT subcommittee should make it a high priority to provide health care services when possible. At a minimum, a Safe Haven should offer a health referral service. A greater emphasis on health care services will help build a healthier community.

Marketing your Safe Haven

The Safe Haven should always be included in the marketing plans of your Weed and Seed site. Safe Haven activities are the types of positive programs that businesses, civic clubs, and churches are likely to support. These organizations may be willing to sponsor a program or a special event. They may also have members who will volunteer for some of your projects.

Develop a marketing plan that will reach out to people who can make the Safe Haven successful. Demonstrate not only what can be done with the limited resources available, but also what could be accomplished with additional help. Always give credit to those who provide assistance and honor their contributions publicly, unless they ask to remain anonymous.

Whenever possible, tell people about the positive contributions of the Safe Haven. This is a

great opportunity to spread positive words about the program.

Implementation Issues

Although the PIT subcommittee makes every effort to be inclusive in its membership and objective in its review of needs and resources, not everyone will agree with its decisions. The following issues may create obstacles to implementing plans.

Competition among service providers can present serious challenges to Weed and Seed. If a local organization already offers satisfactory services for residents, avoid developing a competing program. The best course of action is to form an alliance with the existing program and combine resources. If the existing program is too small to adequately serve the community, try to include it as part of the PIT subcommittee and develop a partnership to support, not compete with, its services.

Inadequate funds can be a major obstacle to operating PIT programs. The most challenging issue for Weed and Seed sites usually is planning how best to allocate available funds.

Remember that local Weed and Seed money is not expected to fund all identified needs, but should be used to establish collaborations that can help leverage funds from other sources.

Local government agencies often assume that they are responsible for providing services and resent others' intrusion even if they are not able to address needs adequately. Try to establish a working partnership with local agencies. Suggest adding your efforts to their existing ones. Avoid confrontations that will be hard to overcome later.

If certain services are not offered, explore ways to attract agencies or organizations to provide them. For example, if you need health care, well baby clinics, and health education, contact a local hospital about providing auxiliary services in your community. Find out what it will take to get them to consider your request.

Even though it seems daunting, the United Way, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, or similar agencies may be able to help. They can also refer you to other agencies or organizations that will work with you. Do not give up too quickly.

Exhibit 10–1. Safe Haven Sample Organizational Structure

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